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Padded Riding Crops: Delaware Commission says “Giddyup”

On August 19, 2008, the Delaware Thoroughbred Racing Commission (DTRC) moved forward with their attempts to adopt the padded riding crop and replace the traditional whips that have been used as standard equipment for many years. “With assistance from the Jockey’s Guild, the Delaware Jockey’s Association, the Jockey Club, National HBPA, and overview by the ARCI Model Rules Committee, we are closing in on final specifications of what will be the next generation of riding crop,” said DTRC Executive Director, John F. Wayne.

At the August 19 DTRC meeting, Wayne reported on comments about the padded whips that were made to him by jockeys he talked with during his recent stay in historic Saratoga Springs where he attended the recent Jockey Club Round Table Meeting. Wayne said, “On the day before the meeting started, I was fortunate to have Jockey Guild National Manager, Terry Meyocks introduce me and reacquaint me with the riding colony at Saratoga. I had an up-close and personal discussion with every rider in the room regarding their viewpoints on the padded crop. All of the comments received were positive with a desire to implement the new equipment.” Jockeys who gave positive opinions on the padded crop were: Javier Castellano, Eddie Castro, Eibar Coa, Kent Desormeaux, Ramon Dominguez, Rene Douglas, Alan Garcia, Channing Hill, Julien Leparoux, Michael Luzzi, Rajiv Maragh, Richard Migliore, Edgar Prado, Gabriel Saez, Jean-Luc Samyn, Cornelio Velasquez, and John Velasquez. In addition to New York jockeys, Delaware jockeys have been experimenting with the crops off and on for several months.

Wayne added, “The first, second, and third generation of riding crops have been improved since some of them did not hold up to the rigors of dirt racing. The latest installment has been fitted with a popper with an outer material that has a marine application. We are hopeful that this material will hold up better over a period of time. The specifications for the crops have been debated, with valuable input from the riders. The DTRC is looking for a model rule that will permit a crop to be between 26 inches minimum length to 30 inches maximum length to allow for the variance of arm length. As for the weight, the consensus is for a crop to weigh no more than 12 ounces. Lastly, the popper must be at least 6.5 inches, contain padding, and have a minimum width of 7/8ths of an inch. One of the riders that I talked to at Saratoga displayed a removable popper which would allow worn poppers to be replaced as needed. Another rider displayed a crop with a leather loop on the end which he claimed was mandated by a West Coast jurisdiction. The Jockey Club may be conducting an impact study on the poppers to add scientific data to the project.”

Final drafting of a padded crop model rule will be part of a discussion of regulatory officials in a work shop session during the upcoming meeting in Deadwood, South Dakota, September 8 and 9, 2008.